Exploratory Paper - 8

ELEMENTS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

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CONTENTS

PART - I

1.	The Mahābhārata	1
2.	The Vaiśeṣika attitude and the Mahābhārata	11

PART - II

3.	Democracy in the Mahābhārata	24
4.	Rājadharmānuśāsana	36
5.	Supremacy of the Rājadharma	45
6.	The King and His choice	52
7.	Āpaddharma	54
8.	The Rājadharma literature - Early Phase	68
9.	The Subsequent literature	75

1. The Mahābhārata

The Mahābhārata has been called an Itihāsa. And there is a controversy with regard to this ascription, because it does not always conform to the modern definition of history. But Itihāsa is an Indian term and it should be accepted in the Indian context. The definition

dharmārthakāmamokṣāṇām upadeśasamanvitam /
pūrvavṛttakathāyuktam itihāsaṃ pracakṣate //

has been accepted on all hands in our country. Kauṭilya Viṣṇugupta's definition *purāṇam itivṛttam ākhyāyikodāharaṇaṃ dharmaośāstram arthaśāstram ce 'tītihāsaḥ* also conforms to the above. The Mahābhārata has been accepted as the best of Itihāsas. It is regarded as a supplement to the Vedas. Nay, it has itself been called the fifth Veda. Itihāsa and Purāṇa were regarded as indispensable aids to the comprehension of the Vedas – *itihāsapurāṇābhyām vedaṃ samupabṛṃhayet.*

In fact, the Mahābhārata exposes the Vedic secrets in a good number of cases. The Vedic topics have been retold, explained and illustrated in it. The age-old Vedic culture as accepted upto the great war of Kurukṣetra and as supplemented till the completion of the text of one lakh verses including the social, religious and philosophical changes of the epic period has been incorporated in it.

The original Bhārata otherwise called the Jaya, composed in twentyfour thousand verses by the sage Vedavyāsa after about two decades of the war and the subsequent additions made by

Vaiśampāyana and Sauti Ugraśravas - his immediate disciples resulted into the Mahābhārata. The subsequent elaborations also are unanimously accepted as 'Vaiyāsika' and their authenticity was never questioned. In fact, we now find different recensions of the text widely varying from one another in details. Each of them has a long history to its credit. As such we cannot ignore any particular section of any of the recensions as spurious. And we have to attach importance to all the materials accumulated in the great reservoir called the Mahābhārata including all the available versions.

The main theme of the epic is, no doubt, a history of the great war together with its causes and consequences. But the epic Mahābhārata adds numerous cultural matters here and there. Sometimes they seem out of context. But actually they enhance its importance all the more. These elements have been classified according to the traditional scheme of values - dharma (meritorious conventions), artha (economics), kāma (enjoyments of life) and mokṣa (final emancipation) together called the caturvarga. In subsequent Indian literature we find separate treatment of each of them. The Mahābhārata is the earliest available work to give each a comprehensive treatment along with due comparison and contrast. It has justly been claimed that in matters relating to this fourfold summum bonum of human life the Mahābhārata enjoins whatever was there in Indian culture and nothing beyond them was to be found elsewhere. Scholars testify to this and a comparison with pre-Mahābhārata and post-Mahābhārata Indian documents attests this.

The Mahābhārata records the views of

numerous authorities in Dharmaśastra including the recognised ones.[1] Vaivasvata Manu, with whom the present Manusaṁhitā is connected, is the most important among them. Among the views attributed to Manu, many are not available in the current Manusaṁhitā and many are attributed to the earlier Manus. Vyāsa himself is recognised as one of the twenty Dharmaśāstra authorities. Besides the usual topics of the Dharmaśāstra literature, the Mahābhārata deals extensively with the Rājadharma as well as the Āpaddharma as its supplement. They formed an inseparable part of the Dharmaśāstra literature of India till the advent of Islam. Besides, the Purāṇa literature which is to be regarded as a supplement to the Mahābhārata also abounds in Dharmaśāstra elements. The commentaries on the Dharmasaṁhitās and the subsequent digests based on them regard the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas as authoritative source-books like the Dharmasahitas themselves.

The Arthaśāstra literature known to the Mahābhārata and the works quoted and criticised in the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya are lost to us. But the quotations and references in the epic offer a working idea about the history as well as contents of this lost literature. A comparison between the epic and the Arthasastra establishes a deep relation between the two. Again Kauṭilya's influence on the works of Kālīdāsa, Bhāravi, Magha, Viśākhadatta, Medhātithi and others also deserves serious considerations.

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1. *manvatri-viṣṇu hārita-yājñavalkyośanoṅgirāḥ /*
yamāpastamba-saṃvarta-kātyāyayana-bṛhaspatiḥ //
parāśara - vyāsa-śaṅkha-Likhitā dakṣa-gautamau /
śātātapo vasiṣṭhaś ca dharmaśāstra-prayojakāḥ //

The Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana attests the existence of a considerable literature during the post-epic period. According to the epic and the Kāmasūtra, kāma has a wider connotation beyond erotics. It embraces important aspects of the civilized society under the influence of Varṇa and Āśrama Institution. It is at the root of the preservation of the society and the whole of our material culture.

Mokṣa means emancipation from all sorts of bondage which are at the root of transmigration, the result of our own deeds - good and bad. The consequences thereof can be exhausted by complete enjoyment, perfect knowledge or total devotion. Most of our philosophical pursuits are related with the mokṣaśāstra which again sprang from the attempts at explaining the Upaniṣadic riddles. Attention is here drawn to the fact that all the philosophical schools including the so-called Nāstika schools trace some śrutis as the basis of their speculations. In their development also other śrutis are drawn to explain particular issues. The Mahābhārata presents accounts of numerous philosophical schools including the extant ones. These accounts are invaluable aids to the reconstruction of the history of the systems particularly of the pre-sūtra period. The epic is aware of several Nyāya schools and advocates the use of the one supported by reason, authority and adoption of the good citizens. It offers important material about the propounder of the Nyāya śāstra, and the Nyāya categories and sub-categories. It refers to scholarly disputations in sacrificial assemblies and royal courts. Nārada is said to be proficient in discovering the excellences and defects in a syllogistic argument. Aśvatthāman is again said

to have derived particular pleasure in the Vitaṇḍā form of disputation.

The Mahābhārata offers a speculation much akin to Kaṇāḍa's Vaiśeśika system of six categories. A sage Kaṇāḍa is referred to along with some of the Vaiśeśika tenets. The Mahābhārata depicts the culture of the post-Vedic society and speculations akin to those in the Pūrva and Uttara mīmāṁsās abound in it. Vedavyāsa himself is the propounder of the Uttara-mīmāmsa while Jaimini, his disciple, propounded the Pūrva-mīmāmsā school. Sāṅkhya and Yoga, receive more elaborate treatment in the epic. The Sāṅkhya speculation during the last ten centuries, mainly centred round the Sāṅkhya-saptati of Īśvarakṛṣṇa which is avowedly atheistic. The Sāṅkhya of the Mahābhārata is, on the other hand, theistic in character. It records in detail the views of Kapila, Āsuri and Pañcaśikha - the earliest known Ācāryas of the system daily remembered by the orthodox Indians in their 'tarpaṇa'. The present Yogasūtra is attributed to Patañjali. But the Mahābhārata attributes yoga to Hiraṇyagarbha who is said to have been followed by several other teachers including Nārada, Yājñavalkya, Janaka and others. The Mahābhārata records the philosophical views of more than ten Janakas. And the Viṣṇupurāṇa shows most of the members of the long line of Janakas as renowned metaphysicians. The Mahābhārata notices the underlying unity of the Sāṅkhya and Yoga tenets along with their common goal.

Cārvāka is a character in the Mahābhārata. All the authoritative works of the system except the very late Tattvopaplavasiṁha of Jayarāśi are lost. During the historical period we hear of the school of

Āmbhīyas, a section of the Cārvākas. Jayantabhaṭṭa presents a Cārvāka named Vṛddhāmbhi. The philosophical schools refer to the Cārvāka views in general and authorities like Purañdara and Udbhaṭa to whom Jayanta refers belong to the redoubtable Cārvāka logicians.

The Buddha as an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu is referred to in the Southern Version of the Mahābhārata. Some Buddhistic views are traceable in it. Again common verses in their Sanskrit and Pāli versions also point out to a relation.

The Mahābhārata offers a detailed account of the two theistic systems, viz. the Pāśupata and the Pāñcarātra schools. The former received a systematic treatment in the Pāśupatasūtra along with Pañcārtha- bhāṣya of Kauṇḍinya. The Pāñcarātra school claims its descent from Lord Nārāyaṇa followed by a long list of teachers including Nārada, Vyāsa and Bhīṣma. The Bhagavadgītā, Viśvopākhyāna, Nārāyaṇiya and Vāṛṣṇeyādhyātma sections of the Mahābhārata present a considerable account of the Pāñcarātra speculations.

The special feature of Vyāsa's presentation of Vedic or subsequent āstika views in philosophy or religion is marked by a sincere attempt, at unification - samanvaya. His Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva are identical or related with one another. We have mentioned that the epic Sāṅkhya is the same as epic Yoga in spirit and both lead to the same goal.

The Karmavāda of the Vedic Saṁhitas has been adjusted with the Jñānavāda of the Upaniṣads. The Pāñcarātra and the Pāśupata elements in the epic introduced the Bhaktivāda, the nucleus of which already appeared in the Saṁhitās and the

incongruous = असंगत / अनुचित / out of place / out of keeping / discordant / dissonant

incongruous

Upaniṣads. It is to be noted that the Vedic Bhakti School received honourable treatment in the epic.

The question of the central philosophy of the Mahābhārata is pertinent. There are scholars who regard the Mahābhārata as a saṁhitā, an encyclopedia, collection of incongruous matters. As such, according to them, we may speak of the epic Sāṅkhya or the epic Yoga. But a systematic philosophy of the epic is an untenable proposition. But one has to consider the overwhelming data to the contrary offered by the epic which ultimately leads to the opposite conclusion. The attempt in presenting the Bhagavadgītā as vitally connected with the Mahābhārata may sound ludicrous in the background of the prevalent theory that the Gītā is an interpolation in the Mahābhārata. But a good number of common verses, half-verses and verse-feet, identical ideas and expressions, elaboration of the Gītā-topics in the whole of the Mahābhārata and the frequent references to the Gītā in different connections in the epic go to establish an organic relation between the texts concerned. The Gītā is thus the essence of the epic and the epic happens to be an elaborate exposition to the teachings of the Gītā. It is not an altogether new finding. The Gītā was known as the "Bhārata-paṅkaja". The epic itself calls it Sarvaśāstra-mayī (VI.43.2). Śaṅkara describes it as Sāmasta-vedārthasārasaṃgrahabhūta, unified quintessence of all the Vedic lore. Many Purāṇas and Upapurāṇas eulogise and summarise the Gītā and give it the supreme position among the religious texts second only to the Vedas. Nīlakaṇṭha is of the opinion –

* *bhārate sarva-vedārtho bhāratārthaś ca kṛtsnaśaḥ /*
gītāyām iti sā gītā sarvaśāstramayī matā //

The Gītā even if removed from the Bhīṣmaparvan of the Mahābhārata may be reconstructed from the rest of the epic. When a reader finds it difficult to ascertain which among the numerous conflicting commentaries of the Gītā is to be followed, the Mahābhārata may serve as the surest guide in disentangling the exegetical difficulties to the satisfaction of all. We have tried to offer a sketch of the fourfold summum bonum of life on which the epic offers detailed discussions. In the subsequent Indian literature dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa received separate treatment. This division holds good even to-day and may be considered helpful in the classification of the vast Indian literature to avoid the other modes of classification found inadequate and overlapping.

The epic has assessed the respective merits and demerits of the four vargas which are outside the scope of the subsequent literature. The epic says that the four are not antagonistic to one another. The first three are mixed with impurities bereft of which all lead to mokṣa which is pure in character.

It shows that artha is not an end in itself. Over-emphasis on artha turns a man in to a demon. Over-emphasis on kāma transforms him into a beast. Similarly, over-emphasis on dharma and mokṣa cuts him off from the society to which he is indebted in every respect and the debts should adequately paid off during this very life.

The Mahābhārata enumerates the Vedic concept of debts and their repayment. They are from the forces of nature viz. earth, water, air, tejas and the ākāśa, from the ancestors, from the ṛṣis, who have

disentangle = extricate (free/remove from a thing that are entangled with)
exegetic = interpretative

exegetic/exegetical exegesis = annotation/gloss

bequeathed a vast mass of knowledge to us, and from the common man who supplies our food and other necessities of life.

The Mahābhārata war in its beginning produced the Bhagavadgītā which is the eternal message of the Lord to humanity. Its other message is *na mānuṣāt śreṣṭhataraṃ hi kiñcit* which India learnt at the huge cost of men and money at Kurukshetra.

The epic cannot and does not ignore the progress of the secular knowledge which originated in the Vedic literature and developed during the epic period. We find a developed scientific attitude which depends upon observation and experiment, the preparation of hypothesis and its conversion into laws on the basis of the sure means of knowledge - perception, inference, comparison and verbal testimony. The growth of civilisation and attraction to urban life brought in their train a number of new sciences and effected significant changes in those that were already there during the Vedic period of Indian history. The science of government had developed to a maximum height during the epic age. The Mahābhārata speaks of a vast number of masters of the political science and their contributions - the different political theories and speculations which may throw welcome light on the present day political problems also. The science of warfare also developed to a great extent. In fact, the excessive and unrestrained devotion to the Dhanurveda brought about the great war of which our epic is an account. Development of military science in the epic age is an interesting study and it can check the proneness to unrestricted armament of the present-day world. The epic speaks of much development of the science of medicine, its eight

critique = समीक्षा

divisions and extensive use. Botany has made considerable progress during the epic period. Architecture also flourished – town planning, construction of huge buildings, forts, etc. are of considerable interest. Metallurgy also made progress. More metals began to be extracted from the womb of the earth and their utilisation for human use including the preparation of alloys deserve notice. The science of astronomy and its different offshoots made considerable progress. Technology flourished in various aspects. The padārthaśāstra, and rasāyana did not lag behind.

There is a considerable attitude of give and take among the gods, ṛṣis, Brāhmaṇas, Gandharvas, Asuras, Dānavas, Nāgas and others in the field of science which helped the growth of the composite epic culture.

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2. The Vaiśeṣika Attitude and the Mahābhārata

A peep through the Vaiśeṣika darśana of Kaṇāḍa is considered necessary before we start our consideration on the scientific data in the Mahābhārata, for the Vaiśeṣika darśana seeks to attain comprehensive knowledge of the contents of nature through comparison and contrast and it is the earliest padārtha–śāstra in India and perhaps in the world. It accepts dravya, guṇa and karma - as the main categories and the validity of the Vedas on the basis of the fact that the Vedic propositions can easily be analysed on the basis of these three categories. The Mahābhārata shows a similar attitude towards nature and uses similar terms. In passages like

āpatsu vihitaṃ stainyaṃ viśiṣṭasamahīnataḥ/
vipreṇa prāṇarakṣārthaṃ kartavyam iti niścayaḥ //
hīnād ādeyam ādau syāt samānāt tadanantaram /
asambhave vā 'dadīta viśiṣṭād api dhārmikāt //

Mahābhārata XII. 141. 39-40

we find close relation with *etena hīnasama-viśiṣṭa dhārmikebhyaḥ parasvādānaṃ vyākhyātam*

Vaiśeṣikadarśanam VI.i .15

and

vaktreṇotpalanālena yathordhvaṃ jalam ādadet /
tathā pavanasaṃyuktaḥ pādaiḥ pibati pādapaḥ //

Mahābhārata XII. 184-16

reminds one of the Vaiśeṣikasūtra,

nādyā vāyu-saṃyogād ārohaṇam

Vaiśeṣikadarśana V.ii.6.

The Khilaharivaṃśa identifies Kaṇāda with lord

Śiva and the later Vaiśeṣika tradition recognises a relation between lord Śiva and the Vaiśeṣika system. The epic shows that living upon the unclaimed grains culled from the fields or roads called uñchavṛtti was regarded as highly meritorious and the life of the pigeon of the sage Kaṇāda can be compared with it.

cf. kumbhadhānyair uñchaśīlaiṛ kāpotīṃ vṛttim āśṛtāḥ
Mahabharata XII. 243. 24

The name Ulūka occurs in the Mahabharata, Ulūkāśrama has been mentioned (MBh V.186.26) and Ulūka - a great Brāhmaṇa (*paramo vipraḥ*) has been mentioned to have attended Bhīṣma on his bed of arrows (Ibid., XII.47.11).

It should be borne in mind that the Vaiśeṣika darśana has gradually changed since its first appearance in the sūtras of Kaṇāda and the early commentaries and digests are now known in name or quotations only. When we speak of the Vaiśeṣika darśana in relation to the Mahābhārata, the sūtras alone are referred to. A modern Vaiśeṣika would certainly equate adṛṣṭa with dharma (merit) and adharma (demerit) and quote *dharmādharmāv adṛṣṭaṃ syāt*[1] from Viśvanātha's Bhāṣāpariccheda in his support. This is not the view of Viśvanātha alone. Praśastapāda also is found to hold it. He adds seven qualities including dharma and adharma to the list of the seventeen qualities as given in *rūpa-rasa-gandha-sparśāḥ saṃkhyāḥ parimāṇāni pṛthaktvaṃ saṃyogavibhāgau paratvāparatve buddhayaḥ sukhaduḥkhe icchādveṣau prayatnāś ca guṇāḥ* VS. (I.i.5). And he also uses the term adṛṣṭa instead of dharma

1. Bhāṣāpariccheda k.161.

and adharma.[1] Vyomaśiva, Śrīdhara and Udayana follow Praśastapāda and there arose no doubt as regards the validity of the equation.

But a doubt does arise when one examines the sūtras of Kaṇāḍa. Praśastapāda wrote his digest to give the Vaiśeṣika tenets a systematic form. But at times he adds new things also. Thus we find in his work a discussion on the creation of the universe. Again, his detailed discussions on duality, chemical action and disjunction from another disjunction etc. are not directly connected with the sūtras. He might have received them from the then available exegetical Vaiśeṣika literature no more available to us. The case of adṛṣṭa also might have been similar. It has not been explained in the sūtras. And Praśastapāda does not adduce any reason while making the equation. The word adṛṣṭa literally means not seen, not observed or not accounted for. That it should exclusively mean merit and demerit and nothing else seems peculiar. One may, however, contend that the Vaiśeṣika has his paribhāṣās (technical phraseology) where he is not guided by the dictionary meanings. But a paribhāṣā is generally fixed by the propounders of the systems keeping the dictionary meaning in view. We may take an example. The term artha is used by Kaṇāḍa to mean dravya (substance), guṇa (quality) and karma (action) collectively. This is given in the Vaiśeṣikasūtra *artha iti dravyaguṇakaramasu* (VS VIII.14). A little reflection will show that nothing beyond these three are sought for (*arthyate*) and hence the term is suitable also. But in the case of

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1. *ca-śabdasamuecitāś ca gurutva-dravatva-sneha-saṃskārādṛṣtaśabdāḥ* (vide Kiraṇāvalī, GOS, p.14.)

adṛṣṭa the author is silent. Again there are many more objects not accounted for or observed over and above merit and demerit of the individual beings. Attempts to connect every event in the universe with merit and demerit seem to mean total sacrifice of the scientific spirit.

The terms dṛṣṭa and adṛṣṭa have been used several times in the Vaiśeṣika sūtras. They are derived from the root dṛś meaning to see. Every Vaiśeṣika accepts that Kaṇāda classified and examined the entities of the universe and made distinct contribution towards the advancement of human knowledge. He seems to divide the entities into known and unknown ones and to distinguish them by the terms dṛṣṭa and adṛṣṭa respectively. His attempt was to widen the horizon of knowledge by comparison and contrast between entities. In many cases he has succeeded to discover the truth. In others his conclusions have been challenged. But the method of investigation adopted by him is one of our richest heritages. Modern sciences also have adopted it. Nobody will deny the fact that Kaṇāḍa developed in the hoary past a scientific attitude which guided him and his followers to ascertain truths about this mysterious universe.

Just like dṛṣṭa and adṛṣṭa the terms darśana and dṛṣṭi are also originally connected with the root dṛś. Thus Kaṇāḍa's darśana consists of the conclusions arrived at by him about the nature of the categories into which the universe is divided by him. These conclusions are his acquisitions in the intellectual field. Vātsyāyana is also found to use the word darśana in the sense of finding, acquisition or

conclusion about the entities. This of course is preceded by adequate investigation on proper lines. Vātsyāyana says that "the soul exists" is the darśana of one philosopher while that "it does not exist" constitutes the darśana of another.[1] In a separate context he remarks that non-acquisition of the truth is called adṛṣṭa. It simply means that adṛṣṭa is derived from a-darśana, the negation of darśana. This simple philosophical approach to the terms dṛṣṭa and adṛṣṭa seems to hold good in the ancient Vaiśeṣika context also.

Let us now see how and where Kaṇāda has actually used these two concepts. There are some cases where the attempts of the sage to give a causal explanation did not meet with the desired success and he is found to designate them as adṛṣṭakārita. Thus the movement of the consecrated stone etc. towards the thief, that of the needle towards the magnet and that of the earth at the time of an earthquake are called adṛṣṭakārita (caused due to unknown conditions). Water sprinkled at the root of a plant runs to all its branches and leaves and this is also called adṛṣṭakārita. The upward movement of the flames, the zigzag course of the wind and the very first movement of the aṇus to form a binary at the time of creation, the first movement of the mind, the association with and the dissociation from the body in the case of the soul, the special contact of food and drink to nourish the body and the contact of the soul with the embryo in the womb are all similar instances.[2] It is clear that things occur and they occur due to certain

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1. Nyāyabhāṣya I.i. 23.
2. VS, GOS Edn. V.i.15; V.ii.2; V.ii.8; V.ii.14; V.ii.19.

conditions. But in the cases mentioned the sage means to say that the conditions responsible to bring out the effects could not be ascertained upto his time. It may be argued that by 'adṛṣṭakārita' he means 'caused by invisible conditions'. But we find him referring to supernatural powers of Vedic rites to produce effects and here he does not use this expression. Of course, we find the use of the expression a-dṛṣṭa in the sense of 'not visually cognised' in *na ca dṛṣṭānāṃ sparśa ity adṛṣṭaliṅgo vāyuḥ* (VS. II.i.10). But this meaning cannot hold good in the cases just cited as well as in cases like *dṛṣṭādṛṣṭaprayojanānāṃ dṛṣṭābhāve prayojanam abhyudayāya* (VS.VI.ii.1), *abhiṣecanopavāsabrahmacaryagurukulavāsavānaprasthayajñadānaprokṣaṇadiṅnakṣatramantrakālaniyamāś cā 'dṛṣṭāya* (VS VI.ii.2), adṛṣṭāt (VS. VI ii.15) and *dṛṣṭeṣu bhāvād adṛṣṭeṣv abhāvāt* (VS VIII.13). In these cases adṛṣṭa suits better to mean ajñāta, ananubhūta or anupalabdha.

Kaṇāḍa evinces firm faith in the law of causation. The cause must precede the effect or the effect will not follow. The cause may not always be known. When the cause is not known, Kaṇāḍa uses the term adṛṣṭakārita with regard to the effect.

One thing deserves consideration here. The causes of the so-called adṛṣṭakārita effects may be known at some subsequent time and in fact, modern scientists have causally accounted for the events like the upward motion of the flames and the zigzag course of the wind. They should no more be regarded as adṛṣṭakārita. The spirit of the sage who seems to have firm faith in the gradual progress of human knowledge cannot be sacrificed.

We propose to refer to a famous saying of Jayantabhaṭṭa, the Nyāya scholar, in order to make

the point clear. Jayanta asks if we suppose that the validity of the Vedas depends upon the Nyāya-śāstra today, what was the means to establish it prior to the advent of Akṣapāda who first propounded the Nyāyaśāstra ? Similarly, one may ask who settled the difficult points of Vedic, grammatical and metrical exegecies before Jaimini, Pāṇini and Piṅgala were born ? Jayanta himself suggests the answer also. He says that all these sciences are there from time immemorial just like the Vedas and people who treated them shortly or elaborated are designated as 'authors' to the respective subjects.[1] Here eternality goes hand in hand with gradual progress. And this progress is clear to the historians of thought in spite of the loss of authentic materials. One will have to sacrifice the scientific spirit if he holds that the last word on the Śāstra was said by the sage himself. We have already seen that the sage does not hesitate to term things unknown as unknown.

But unfortunately this spirit did not persist long and we find attempts to explain things with the preconceived notion of omniscience of the propounder of the Śāstra. But we find Praśastapāda to distinguish people like himself from the Yogin[2] and in *na cā 'smadbuddhibhyo liṅgam ṛṣeḥ* (VS VI. i. 2) recognised as a Vaiśeṣikasūtra by authorities like Śrīdhara (Nyāyakandalī p.216), Udayana (Kiraṇāvalī p.115), Bhaṭṭa Vādīndra and Candrānanda (but omitted by Śaṅkaramiśra). Kaṇāḍa distinguishes himself from a ṛṣi which means a 'seer' and is generally taken to mean omniscient. Later ācāryas insist upon attributing omniscience to the authors

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1. Nyāyamañjarī (Chowkhamba Edn.), p.5.
2. Nyāyakandali (Chowkhamba Edn.), p.216.

of the different Śāstras. Not only that, attributes like 'tāyin' and 'paramakāruṇika' originally used for the Buddha came to be used for the propounders of other Śāstras also. The attempt to use these for others seems to be actuated by a desire to have a counterpart of the Buddha in other schools as well. The same may be true with regard to the epithet sarvajña which replaced its ancient counterpart ṛṣi in later works.

It may be added in this connection that the connotation of the term Sarvajña is found to vary from one system to another. Still it is found to be used in the general sense also. The Buddhist holds one as omniscient (sarvajña), when one knows the implication of the four noble truths. Dharmakīrti clearly shows that sarvajña according to the Buddhist, need not know the number of the flies in the air. Nor does clear vision constitute omniscience. In the later case a vulture should deserve the worship offered to the sage.[1] The later Buddhist scholar Ratnakīrti echoes the assertion of Dharmakīrti when he says - *upayuktasarvajñam eva prasādhayāmaḥ*. And to him upayuktasarvajña means nothing but the knower of the four noble truths.[2] It is interesting to note that some people who refute the omniscience of the propounders of other schools accept the same in the sage or sages of their own schools. A verse current among the philosophers raises the partinent question - If you accept Kapila as omniscient how is that you deny the same attribute to the Buddha ? And if both are taken as

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1. Pramāṇavārttika, I.35.
2. Ratnakīrtinibandhāvalī (First, Edn.), p.37.

omniscient how is that they differ in their views?[1] It shows that the term omniscient to be used in respect of both required to be restricted in its connotation.

The Mīmāmsakas do not accept omniscience at all. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika also seems to accept no human being as omniscient. Udayana is clear on this point when he says - *tadanyasmin anāśvāsāt* (Nyāyakusumāñjali II.i), there is no faith in the omniscience of any other being except the Almighty.

Of course the Jaina conception of omniscience differs from that of others and the omniscient being according to the Jaina knows everything under every circumstance and everybody is potentially an omniscient being.

Thus we find that the word sarvajña does not always signify the knowledge of everything. And omniscience in the case of human beings is not accepted by all. Kaṇāḍa may be called a ṛṣi or sarvajña only in a secondary sense. It is not, therefore, impossible that some properties of some entities should remain unknown to him under certain circumstances.

We have no objection in accepting that in many cases, dharma and adharma may remain unknown. But that does not ensure that the denotation and connotation of dharma and adharma taken together should be identical with those of adṛṣṭa. Things other than merit and demerit may also fall within the scope of adṛṣṭa. What is adṛṣṭa today, may be

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1. *Kapilo yadi sarvajñaḥ sugato neti kā pramā /*
   tāv ubhau yadi sarvajñau matabhedas tayoḥ kaṭham //

dṛṣṭa tomorrow and what is adṛṣṭa to X may be dṛṣṭa to Y.

Again, there are cases where causal connection has been shown as due to dharma as distinguished from adṛṣṭa. Thus dream and dream within a dream may be due to dharma according to the Sūtra–*dharmācca* (VS IX.24). Here dharma has specifically been used. Similar is the case in *ārṣaṃ siddhadarśanaṃ ca dharmebhyaḥ* (VS. IX. 28).

The term dharma is not always used in the sense of 'merit' in the Vaiśeṣikadarśana. We may cite the two initial sūtras of Kaṇāda to prove our contention. In *athā 'to dharmaṃ vyākhyāsyāmaḥ* (VS I. i.1), the sage fixes up the scope of his discourse saying that in the treatise he will explain dharma. In the second sūtra he defines dharma–*yato 'bhyudayaniḥśreyasa-siddhiḥ sa dharmaḥ* (I.i.2). According to some, in both the cases dharma means merit. But the whole treatise is found to discuss the characteristics of the categories and not 'merit' alone as suggested by Śaṅkaramiśra and others. They cannot explain why the sage should indulge in describi .g things which have not even a remote connection with merit when his starting assertion proposes to restrict the discussion on 'merit' alone. Nobody would take a man seriously whose behaviour does not conform to his pronounced proposal. The Buddhists have actually pointed out that to describe the six categories by one desirous of describing 'merit' is similar to go to the Himalayas with a view to go to the sea.[1] In fact many things discussed in the Śāstra

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1. *dharmaṃ vyākhyātukāmasya ṣaṭpadārthopavarṇanam samudraṃ gantukāmasya himavadgamanopamam //*

would be meaningless if merit becomes the sole object of discussion here.

The method of attaining a truth in this Śāstra is the application of comparison and contrast for which sādharmya and vaidharmya are the technical terms. Both of them are derived from dharma. It will be ridiculous in case we derive them for the word dharma which denotes 'merit'.

It is, therefore, proper to hold that in both the sūtras dharma denotes 'characteristics' and not 'merit'. The Whole treatise discusses the characteristics of the categories (including, of course, merit and demerit which are the characteristics of the soul). Characteristics form the basis of comparison and contrast. If these are accepted, there will be no contradiction between the initial assertion and the actual practice.

It should be made clear that no commentator on the Sūtras available today accepts this meaning of the term dharma. The Sūtras in question do not specifically assert whose characteristics they propose to discuss. Here we may turn our attention to the Padārthadharmasaṃgraha of Praśastapāda. It is the most authoritative Vaiśeṣika text, next of course, to the Sūtras. A Saṃgraha is a digest faithfully summarising the views of the Sūtra and the Bhāṣya.[1] The present saṃgraha in its initial verse proposes to deal with the characteristics of the categories (*padārthadharmasaṃgrahaḥ pravyākyāyate*). Udayana at the conclusion of the expression adds *etena... trisūtrī vyākhyātā*[2] meaning thereby that it explains the first

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1. Nātyaśāstra VI.9.
2. *Vide* Kiraṇāvali (GOS), p.9.

three sūtras of Kaṇāḍa including the two quoted above. When the verse is read in the background of these sūtras it becomes clear that Praśastapāda equates dharma with Padārtha-dharma and Udayana lends his support to this view.

It should be added here that the above will warrant a substantial change in the import of the first three sūtras.[1]

The first will then mean : Hereafter we shall explain the characteristics of the categories. The second sūtra will assert : By dharma we mean that from which prosperity and emancipation arise. This definition of dharma requires a little clarification. It is well-known that proper application of proper objects produces desired results. One should first know the characteristics of the entities by comparison and contrast so that one may apply them properly. In *tadvacanād āmnāyaprāmāṇyam* (I.i.3.) the sage seems to assert that (to a Vaiśeṣika) the authority of the Vedas is derived from the delineation of these characteristics. The importance of the Vedas varies from school to school and man to man. To a Vaiśeṣika its importance is in the fact that it gives him a knowledge of the characteristics of the deities, the sacrifices and the self. Hence the Vedas serve a purpose which the Vaiśeṣika seeks to bring to perfection from the philosophical point of view. The Vaiśeṣika, therefore, supports the validity of the Vedas in unambiguous language.

The continuity of the Vaiśeṣika traditions was broken long ago and the ancient exegetical works

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1. *athā' to dharmaṃ vyākhyāsyāmaḥ* (VS. I.i.1), *yato 'bhyudayaniḥśreyasa-siddhiḥ sa dharmaḥ* (VS.I.i.2) and *tad-vacanād āmnāyaprāmāṇyam* (VS I.i.3).

like the Vaiśeṣikavākya, the Rāvaṇabhāṣya and the Bhāṣyaṭīkā of Praśastamati etc. have been lost. References to and quotations in later works are the only means for knowing their existence. Śaṅkaramiśra and other commentators on the Sūtras do not betray any acquaintance with these ancient Vaiśeṣika works. The views available in later works are found tinged with non-Vaiśeṣika tenets. Critical examination, therefore, seems necessary to ascertain the import of the Sūtras of Kaṇāḍa.

The Vaiśeṣikaśāstra of Kaṇāda is said to be helpful in the study of all the śāstras just like the grammar of Pāṇini. In the field of the study of the padārtha-speculation in the Mahabharata also its importance is considerable. The epic gives the results only. And the method for its achievement can be guessed with the help of Kaṇāda's treatise.

The treatment of the five elements, kṣiti (earth), apa (water), tejas (fire), marut (air) and vyoma (space), in the Mahābhārata in diverse connections deserve elaborate comparison with those in the Vaiśeṣika literature. The methodology followed in the Mahabharata very much resembles that of the Vaiśeṣika. But it should be remembered in this connection that to the Vaiśeṣikas the elements are bhautika (material) while those in the Mahābhārata are āhaṃkārika (evolutes from the ego in the later Sāṅkhya sense).

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3. Democracy in the Mahābhārata

Of the several systems of Government witnessed in the vast expanse of Indian history, that of benevolent autocracy has been best suited to the genius of the country. It has been guided by the best brains and has been based upon a code of conduct evolved through the age-old national experience during the different phases of our culture. The Mahābhārata offers elaborate account of all its relevant aspects and advocates its safe adoption to the exclusion of others in the Rājadharma section of the Śāntiparvan in particular. It deals with the origin and development of kingship, its drawbacks and virtues along with popular control on it by a council of ministers with proper education and devotion to the cause of the nation. It is to be noted that Daṇḍanīti, the science of government has been eulogised as the mother of the world. That it formed an important aspect of our Dharmaśāstra upto the advent of Islam in India is attested by the Dharmasaṁhitās and nibandha works. It flourished in the regions where native culture prevailed even during the Mohamedan period. The Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya occupies an outstanding position in our ancient political literature. It is supposed to be the work of an Ācārya, whose theoretical proficiency very largely contributed to the establishment and guidance of the Great Mauryan Empire. A study of the epics, Purāṇas, Dharmaśāstra works and later digests including the Arthaśāstra and epigraphical records offers invaluable materials for the reconstruction of

a connected history of the science of government in India spread over several millennia.

Side by side with constitutional monarchy there existed numerous democratic governments as is attested by the epic, the Arthaśāstra, the Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini and the accounts of Alexandar's historians.

The Vedas, Epics and Purāṇas had their origin under monarchies. But they praise the virtues of republics and evince sympathy at their weakness. A deep study convinces one about the mutual give and take between the two schools of political thought. We find Śrī Kṛṣṇa, a republican, espousing the cause of the monarchical Pāṇḍavas in the Kurukshetra war. Similarly, Mahāvīra and the Buddha both born and brought up in republics had very close relations with contemporary monarchies.

But a complete picture of the ancient republics cannot be had to-day due to their gradual disappearance after the Mauryan age. Whatever we get, comes through the supporters of monarchy. But it presents a picture of an important aspect of Indian genius. The Vedas and the Vedic literature offer peeps in the republican institutions, some of which survived and flourished till the invasion of Alexander the great. He came across a good number of city states with republican constitution consisting of educated, warlike, rich and proud citizens. They offered stiff resistance to the Macedonians whose historians eulogised their virtues.

The Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini mentions republican institutions called Pūgas, Vrātas and Saṅghas differing from one another mainly in respect of the means of livelihood of the citizens. Among the republican states invaded by Alexander, we find unions on caste basis. The unions of the Brāhmaṇas,

(Brachmanoi), Kṣatriyas (Xathroi), Ambasthas (Ambastanoi) and Kṣūdrakas (Oxydrakai) deserve special mention. The last one seems to have predominantly consisted of the Śūdras.

The Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya professedly a monarchical work, refers to the republics in its eleventh Adhikaraṇa in connection with their relation with the princes. According to Kauṭilya, a republic as an ally can be of much help in respect of military and economic spheres. And a prince desirous of prosperity should, therefore, keep the republics on his own side through pacification (sāma) and gratification (dāna). When antagonistic, they should be subdued by creating dissension (bheda) and by force (daṇḍa). Kauṭilya mentions the republics of Kamboja and Saurāṣṭra where people lived on agriculture and warfare. He further mentions the republics of the Licchavis, the Vajjikas, the Mallakas, Madrakas, Kukuras, Kurus and Pañcalas. The Kukuras were a branch of the Yādavas while the Kurus and Pañcalas seem to be the successors of the two main contending parties destroyed at Kuruksetra. Kauṭilya's advice to the heads of the republics is that they would be just in their dealings, look after the welfare of the citizens, be popular, benevolent, self-restrained and in constant touch with the citizens and serve to fulfil their aspirations.

The Mahābhārata along with the Khila Harivaṁśa offers highly valuable informations about the republican tenets (XII. 108, Critical Edn.). In a conversation between Bhīṣma and Yudhiṣṭhira both the advantages and disadvantages of the republics have been recounted. Yudhiṣṭhira wants to know from the grand old historian how the Gaṇas can

flourish, remain united, conquer enemies and acquire allies, when they are usualy confronted with two great disadvantages : (i) They fell easy victim to internal dissension and (ii) It is very difficult for them to keep the state policies a close secret.

bhedamūlo vināśo hi gaṇānām upalakṣaye /
mantrasaṃvaraṇaṃ duḥkhaṃ bahūnām iti me matiḥ //

It may be noted here that these disadvantags confront the present-day republics also including our own. Now let us hear what Bhīṣmadeva has to say on these problems. He says that greed and intolerance among the citizens are the two enemies in the republican state and republican society just as those on the part of a prince in a princely state.

gaṇānāṃ ca kulānām ca rājñāṃ bharatasattama /
vairasandīpanāv etau lobhāmarṣau narādhipa //

Greed and intolerance on the part of one section leads to quarrels. They together bring about financial loss and loss of life on both the sides and consequently the result becomes disastrous on the part of both.

Pacification, gratification and disintegration through espionage, secret planning, use of force and grabbing of property on the part of one section create loss of men and money and raise fear in the other. The perpetual estrangement between them becomes the inevitable result.

Now the different sections of a split up Gaṇa of which concord should be the mainstay, when separated from one another through gratification from outside become depressed in mind and fall an easy prey to the outside enemy through fear.

tatrā 'dānena bhidyante gaṇāḥ saṃghātavṛttayaḥ /
bhinnā vimanasaḥ sarve gacchanty a rivaśaṃ tadā //

A discord in a Gaṇa causes its destruction as the enemies find it easy to conquer the sections one after another. Hence mutual concord should be accepted as their aid to prosperity.

bhede gaṇā vinaśyur hi bhinnās tu sujayāḥ paraiḥ /
tasmāt saṃghātayogena prayateran gaṇāḥ sadā //

When the Gaṇas live in mutual concord, they attain riches through the prowess of their united force. Outside enemies also befriend those in concord.

arthāś cai 'vābhigamyante saṇghātabalapauruṣaiḥ /
bāhyāś ca maitrīṃ kurvanti teṣu saṃghātavṛttiṣu //

The wise are eloquent in praise of the Gaṇa of which the citizens respectfully hear one another's views. They attain all round happiness when bereft of mutual deception.

jñānavṛddhāḥ praśaṃsanti śuśrūṣantaḥ parasparam /
vinivṛttābhisandhānāḥ sukham edhanti sarvaśaḥ //

The heads of the Gaṇas (i.e. the elders) who establish just and equitable conventions according to the scriptures and zealously guard their observance help them to attain all round prosperity.

The ideal democrats should restrain their sons, brothers and other relatives and should always impart proper education to them. They should entrust state responsibility to them only when they become fit for the same through moral and general education.

This contributes to the prosperity to the Gaṇa.

putrān bhrātṝn nigṛhṇvanto vinayantaś ca tān sadā /
vinītāṃś ca pragṛhṇvanto vivardhante gaṇottamāḥ //

The Gaṇas, the citizens of which as a whole are always attentive to espionage, secret counsel and in

replenishing the public exchequer, attain all-round prosperity.

cāramantravidhāneṣu kośasannicayeṣu ca /
nityayuktā mahābāho vardhante sarvato gaṇāḥ //

The Gaṇas are destined to prosper when they are always attentive in honouring with employment of the people who are wise, valiant, of great prowess and of abiding manliness in the discharge of the public duties.

prājñān śūrān mahotsāhān karmasu sthirapauruṣān /
mānayantaḥ sadā yuktā vivardhante gaṇā nṛpa //

People who are wealthy, brave, expert warriors and well-versed in the scriptures protect the Gaṇas when they become highly perplexed by serious adversities.

dravyavantaś ca śūrāś ca śastrjñāḥ śāstrapāragāḥ /
kṛcchrāsv āpatsu saṃmūḍhān gaṇān santārayanti te //

Anyone among anger, split, fear, punishment, snatching, imprisonment and murder instantaneously puts a Gaṇa under the control of the enemy. Therefore, the elders should primarily be respected by the people of the republic as the worldly affairs largely depend on them.

krodho bhedo bhayaṃ daṇḍaḥ karṣaṇaṃ nigraho vadhaḥ/
nayaty arivaśaṃ sadyo gaṇān bharatasattama //
tasmān mānayitavyās te gaṇamukhyāḥ pradhānataḥ /
lokayātrā samāyattā bhūyasī teṣu pārthiva //

Secret counsel and espionage are in charge of the elders and the entire body of citizens have no access to such counsels. As such the elders in a body should decide the warfare of the Gaṇa.

mantraguptiḥ pradhāneṣu cāraś cāmitrakarṣaṇa /
na gaṇāḥ kṛtsnaśo mantraṃ śrotum arhanti bhārata //

gaṇamukhyais tu saṃbhūya kāryaṃ gaṇahitaṃ mithaḥ /

When the Gaṇa is divided and its members are scattered here and there, its best interests suffer and disaster follows.

pṛthag gaṇasya bhinnasya vitatasya tato 'nyathā /
arthāḥ pratyavasīdanti tathā 'narthā bhavanti ca //

When the citizens of a Gaṇa are split up and try to perform the state duties according to personal or group interests, the main duty of the expert democrats should be to curb them immediately.

teṣām anyonyabhinnānāṃ svaśaktim anutiṣṭhatām /
nigrahaḥ panditaiḥ kāryaḥ kṣipram eva pradhānataḥ //

A quarrel arising in a Gaṇa, when overlooked by the elders, brings about destruction of the clan or state in question.

kuleṣu kalahā jātāḥ kulavṛddhair upekṣitāḥ
gotrasya nāśaṃ kurvanti

An internal fear destined to bring about dissidence should be dispelled forthwith. An external fear is of lesser consequence. The former cuts the root of the Gaṇa in no time.

gaṇabhedasya kārakam /
ābhyantaraṃ bhayaṃ rakṣyam asāraṃ bāhyato bhayam /
ābhyantaraṃ bhayaṃ rājan sadyo mūlāni kṛntati //

When sudden appearance of anger, delusion or covetousness which are but natural, blocks usual mutual greetings among citizens, it indicates the ensuing discomfiture.

akasmāt krodhamohābhyāṃ lobhād vā 'pi svabhāvajāt /
anyo'nyaṃ nā 'bhibhāṣeta tatparābhavalakṣaṇam //

The citizens are equal to one another in respect of birth and clan. But in respect of diligence,

intellect, physical charm and worldly possession everyone is different from his counterpart.

jātyā ca sadṛśāḥ sarve kulena sadṛśās tathā /
na cō 'dyogena buddhyā vā rūpadravyeṇa vā punaḥ //

The enemies try to destroy the Gaṇas by creating dissensions as well as by bribery. As such, concord has been pronounced the safe shelter of the Gaṇas.

Now it is for us, the citizens of a new republic to pause for a while to think, if we follow the principles enunciated long ago. Do we respect the elders ? Do the elders guard the best interests of the republic ? Are we alive to the dangers - internal and external ? Have quarrel and selfishness been eradicated to an appreciable extent ? Do we consider public property as a sacred trust ?

In a separate chapter (XII. 82. Crit. Ed.) the Mahābhārata reproduces a conversation between Nārada and Śrī Kṛṣṇa regarding the actual state of things in the Yādava republic. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, it should be remembered here, was the mainstay of the republic though Akrūra, his kinsman and Ugrasena, his maternal grand-father representing the Vṛṣṇis and Bhojas respectively, were its executive authority. Kṛṣṇa was an ideal democrat. We hear him saying,

I do not like to see any citizen of our state emaciated with hunger, dirtily clad and praying for help from others. (Harivaṃśa, Crit. Edn. 86.60)

He received the highest honour as a statesman from the court of Yudhiṣṭhira at the Rājasūya sacrifice where Bhīṣma recounts his virtues that entitled him the honour in question –

ṛtvig gurus tathā 'cāryaḥ snātako nṛpatiḥ priyaḥ /
sarvam etad hṛṣīkeśaḥ

(MBh II. 38.22)

This bears much significance as it comes from the patriarch who was an ardent advocate of monarchy. We may incidentally refer to Dhṛtarāṣṭra's advice to Yudhiṣṭhira just before the former's retirement to forest in the Āśramavāsikaparvan. The king, he says, should, with his ministers, try his best to smash the Gaṇas.

This is but the usual attitude of the monarchists towards the Gaṇas.

In spite of all his virtues and services to the Yādavas, Krishna had to face serious difficulties due, mainly, to the enmity between Akrūra and Ugrasena. Dejected, Śrī Kṛṣṇa addresses Nārada saying that state secrets of utmost significance should not be disclosed to one who is not favourably disposed. Even if he is so, he cannot know of it if he is not learned enough. Again a learned and well-disposed citizen also cannot be trusted when he is not self-possessed. My leadership over my fellow citizens, he goes on, is indeed slavery to them. I receive only half of my dues and have got to endure harsh criticism. My kinsmen churn and burn my heart. They vie with one another. They are extremely proud of their personal virtues to the neglect of others. Balarāma, Gada and Pradyumna are arrogant on this account or that and I am helpless. Other Yādavas are endowed with prosperity and strength. They are not easily accessible. Their favour makes and disfavour mars anybody. Akrūra and Ugrasena are the leaders of the Vṛṣṇi-Bhoja confederacy. I do not side with either and each creates obstacles in my way. There

is no misfortune greater than having these two as allies. Again there is no greater misfortune in not having them as such. I, like the mother of two gamblers, pray for the victory of one and safety from defeat of the other".

Now Kṛṣṇa respectfully seeks Nārada's advice which may lead himself and his fellow citizens to prosperity. Here Nārada's analysis of the problem and the remedy suggested are in agreement with the principles enunciated earlier. The only difference is that he looks at them in a particular context. He says - Dangers to the Gaṇa rule are twofold. The one comes from outside and the other springs from within. The latter also may either be created by oneself or by others. The danger in question, was created by Kṛṣṇa himself as he himself did not assume the charge of the state after the elimination of Kamsa, the tyrant who eclipsed the republican set-up of the Yādavas.

Nārada goes on - "You earned the power and handed it over to others. They have now spread their roots and the republic is now known to have been ruled by them. They have their respective political allies. You cannot easily take its leadership back. Any attempt for this is fraught with the danger of split. This is particularly so when you yourself became a party to the dispute. Even if the end is achieved after serious exertion, it will mean a huge loss and waste. It may even mean total annihilation".

The advice of Nārada is therefore "Use a soft weapon not made of any metal that penetrates the heart alone and removes the crook (read jihmam for jihrvām in the printed text) by constant sharpening. Nārada further elucidates - Distribution of food,

endurance, simplicity, sweet behaviour and due reception to the worthy on the part of the leader constitute the weapon in question. Through pleasant speech pacify the bitter and unbecoming speeches, hearts and minds of those who want to abuse you."

"None but a great soul, nor but a self-possessed man having strong allies can undertake a heavy responsibility just a highborn ox carries heavy loads on perilous roads. Discord brings about destruction of a sangha. A sangha refuses to accept the leadership of even a learned man if he is not intelligent, tolerant, self-possessed and philanthrophic."

"The elevation of the Gaṇa is praiseworthy and conducive to fame and long life. Hence act in such a way that your own people may flourish. You know all the six expedients of dealing with the external enemy. The Yādavas and their sub-gaṇas, the Kukuras, Bhojas, Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis - all are sub-servient to you - both the primary senators and the elders".

We thus get a not too bright picture of the inner working of the Yādava republic during their heyday in Dvaravati. Their military supremacy and the sound democratic conventions receive eloquent praises from Sañjaya, the wise minister of Dhṛtarāṣtra (MBh VIII. 144). According to Sañjaya, the Yādavas do not insult their kinsmen, follow the lead of the elders, do not covet the properties of the Brāhmaṇas, preceptors and kinsmen and help them while in need. They do not dspise the strong, always help the weak, are devoted to the gods, are self-possessed and humble in disposition. It is because of this that the Vṛṣṇi confederacy is ever victorious. But in spite of every advantage there were some cancerous growths among the Yādavas

that did not allow the republic to survive its leader. The Yādava youths became discourteous to the intelligencetsia. Earlier rivalry persisted in disguise and assumed a magnitude in spite of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's best efforts to suppress it. Their addiction to drinking was proverbial. The climax was reached in a pleasure trip to the Raivataka and the entire Yādava race was killed as a result of an internecine quarrel.

The Mahābhārata further mentions the republics of the Yaudheyas, Kṣūdrakas, Mālavas, Vasatis, Sibis, Ambasṭhas, Uḍūmbaras, Trigartas, Madras, Kekāyas, Prasthālas, Utsava-saṃketas and the Pañcalas. But we know not much about their position except some glimpses of the last one, among which a tyrant Ugrayudha by name usurping all political rights of the people. Bhīṣma uprooted him and made Pratipa the head of the Pañcāla republic. This brought about a temporary peace between the Kurus and Pañcālas who were rivals for ages. But this temporary peace evaporated due to the offering of shelter to Droṇa by Bhīṣma in the Kaurava court as Droṇa was an arch enemy of Drupada, son of Pratipa and the then leader of the Pañcālas.

The ancient republics in India vanished one after the other leaving traces of democracy here and there. They were the victims of violations of the principles of democracy. They have left for us a warning that we should not repeat the same blunders to reap the same consequences. The whole human culture has been enriched by the free thinking developed in the three republics of the Yādavas, Vajjis and the Śākyas embodied in the Bhagavadgītā and the Jaina and Buddhist Cannons.

4. Rājadharmānuśāsana

To do justice to any problem in the Mahābhārata at least one reading from its beginning to the end is necessary. And that takes months. Any attempt to minimise the time is bound to offer partial result to even the specialists. The science of politics, which is called the Rājadharma in India is no exception. The main problem is dealt with in the Śāntiparvan and covers chapters 56-173 thereof. Chapters 130 onwards deal with the Āpaddharma, practically an appendix propounding the duties of the king during emergencies.

After the great war of Kurukṣetra, Yudhiṣṭhira was duly coronated. He observed the customary pacification of the subjects and the near and dear ones of the fallen king, Duryodhana. When everything was set right, the new king paid a visit to Śrī Kṛṣṇa camp in the capital itself and found him in deep contemplation over the intellectual loss with the demise of Bhīṣma who was now on his bed of arrows and whose days were numbered. It was the Lord's concern to see that the knowledge of dharma acquired by Bhīṣma throughout the long life from every possible source does not disappear from the earth with Bhīṣma himself. And he suggested that Yudhiṣṭhira should acquire as much knowledge about the four traditional branches of learning - dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa as possible. The king visited the dying hero along with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Nārada, Vyāsa and others. Nārada and Vyāsa approved the idea of Yudhiṣṭhira's taking lessons

from Bhīṣma whose physical and mental troubles disappeared through the grace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Yudhiṣṭhira desired to know about the mutual strife between the Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas which incidentally played a considerable part during the great war also. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself narrated the story of Paraśurāma and his exploits. But the political implication and remedy of the tussle came from Bhīṣma later on.

Yudhiṣṭhira and others consider Rājadharma as the sustainer of the state as well as the culture of the land. The three goals of life, piety, economic affluence and fulfilment of desire depend upon it. So is final emancipation from worldly bondage. Rājadharma restrains the people going astray. And a confusion regarding its real nature results in disorder and destruction. Rājadharma removes the confusion and checks its evil consequences.

Bhīṣma began his teaching - anuśāsana with the king's foremost duty, pleasing the people, gods and Brāhmaṇas through just and impartial rule. He considers worship of the gods and the intelligentsia as paying off the debts and pleasing to the people. Constant exertion on the part of the king is the best among his aides. It makes evil destiny favourable. Temporal failure should not deter the king from his philanthrophic endeavours. Truthfulness is the next virtue that endears him to all. It is the highest treasure even to the Ṛṣis. It makes the king trustworthy to everybody. A virtuous, honest, benevolent, mild, dutiful and self-possessed king does not suffer defeat. Simplicity or timidity on the part of the king should be qualified by the knowledge of the science of politics and the threefold secrecy regarding the personal weaknesses

of the king, the council and the royal projects. The behaviour of the king should be harsh as well as amiable according to the demand of the situation. The intelligentsia should be respected. Here Bhīṣma quotes two verses from Manu saying that fire came out of water, Kṣatriya from the Brāhmaṇa and iron from stones. The strength of the effect in each case, shrinks when it comes in conflict with the cause. The stone breaks the sharp edge of iron. Fire is quenched through water. Similarly when the Kṣatriya comes in conflict with the Brāhmaṇa, he suffers most. The Brāhmaṇa should be respected as they preserve the fund of knowledge intact. Still a Brāhmaṇa detrimental to the welfare of the three worlds should be kept in check even by force. Uśanas proclaims that a Vedic scholar, sword in hand and with evil design must be restricted by a pious king. One who protects the dharma from tyranny incurs no sin. Still the Brāhmaṇas deserve protection. Those in fault should of course be banished from the kingdom without physical torture. The people are generally fond of Brāhmaṇas and the king must seek popular support for him and his kingdom's welfare. The śāstra has recommended six kinds of forts - those called dhanvadurga, jaladurga, mahīdurga, vanadurga parvatadurga and naradurga. The last one is the most important among them. As such the Kṣatriya should be kind enough to all the sections of the people. Truthful and pious kings, even if harsh in extreme cases, remain popular. But unbridled kind behaviour brings ruin. Bṛhaspati's warning here runs - The wicked people always get the upper hand over a king submissive in nature. The king should

Aneesh Das

therefore imitate the vernal sun, neither too hot nor too cold.

The king should always examine his own people and the external ones through the four means of knowledge, perception, inference, comparison and verbal testimony.

Excessive addictions should be avoided. Those in permissible degrees, however, are allowed in the case of the king. The vyasanas - personal vices have elsewhere been classified and counted. Those arising from kāma are hunting, dice, sleep during the day time, discussing scandals, sex, intoxication, the threefold music and aimless loitering. And those from anger are back-biting, rashness, secret killing, intolerance towards other's virtues, finding fault with the virtuous, vices relating to money, harshness in language and harshness in punishment. These personal vices make one unpopular. And one with excessive aversion towards others creates alarm among the people. The king should avoid his personal inclinations in the interest of the people much like the expectant mother who curtails her excesses for the welfare of the child in her womb.

The king should never lose steadiness and a steady dispenser of manifest punishment has no fear.

Loose talk or loose behaviour with the servants should be totally avoided. Too much familiarity encourages them to insult the master, transgress the appropriate limit and ignore his orders. They hesitate to stick to the alloted duties, make out the secrets, crave for things unattainable and enjoy the objects meant for the king. They abuse, and evince anger against the king, take bribes and harm the

royal interests through deceit. They create consternation in the territory through fake royal orders , mix with the guards of the harem, use dresses like the king and spit or vomit in his presence. They often criticise the king in the assembly just like friends. They laugh at the angry king, show no pleasure when rewarded and quarrel among themselves and with the king for personal interests. They make public the secret counsel and talk about the king's weaknesses, and negligently carry out the orders at ease and with contempt. They perform their toilet within the hearing of the king, blame their own duties and shirk them. Dissatisfied with their own emoluments they rob the king of his dues. They want to play with the king as with birds in chains and declare that the king is subservient to them. Such and other vices raise their heads when the king is lenient and light hearted.

The king should remain ever alert and active. Uśanas says the earth devours the king who is non-challenging by nature and the Brāhmaṇa afraid of absence from home, just like the snake that devours the rats and other animals living in holes. It is the duty of a king to make peace with those fit to be friends and fight with those deserving punishment. One who hampers the interests of the seven limbed state, must be punished even if he is the preceptor or a friend. The limbs are the king, his ministers and officers, friendly powers, treasure, territory, forts and the army. Marutta sang an ancient verse giving the views of Bṛhaspati to the effect that punishment should be administered even to a guru (preceptor or the father) in case he becomes insolent. King Sāgara, son of Bāhu banished his eldest son Asamañjas for the good of the citizens.

And this Asamañjas used to drown the innocent children of the people in the Sarayu. The sage Uddālaka also left his dear son Śvetaketu of great penance, when the latter did some disservice to the Brāhmaṇas. The eternal duty of the king is to please and serve the people, to uphold the truth and to maintain impartiality in dissolving disputes. He should not violate other's properties and make payment in proper time. And the king endowed with prowess, truthful and kind-hearted never swerves from the right path. A self-possessed man who has overcome anger, is certain about the import of the Śāstras, remains devoted to the four goals of life and maintains secrecy with regard to the group of three, viz. loss, gain and the neutral state of finance, can rule over the kingdom. The most heinous crime of the king is to leave the people unprotected. To see the duties of the four varṇas go unhampered and save the people from intermixture of dharmas are the eternal duties of the king. The king should not disbelieve his own people and others. Nor should he put absolute faith in them. He should always punctuate the merits and demerits particularly, the six expedients, viz., sandhi (peace), vigraha (fighting), yāna (march against the enemy), āsana (laying in wait for the opportunity against the enemy), saṃśraya (taking shelter under a king mightier than both the contending parties taken together) and dvaidhībhāva (creating confusion as regards the intention of the king himself or creating split in the enemy's ranks through espionage, bribery, etc.). A king, inquisitive of the weaknesses of his enemy and attentive to cover his own weaknesses with knowledge of the group of three and with espionage

and means of creating disturbance in the enemy's territory, is always praised. Similarly, the king desirous of enhancing the treasury, comparable to Yama and Kubera in respect of punishment and wealth and having a knowledge of the group of ten along with gain, loss and equilibrium in each of them, is also praised. The ministers, territories, forts, treasuries and armies of both the aspiring king and his enemy together form the group of the ten. The king should feed those having no relatives and protect those in affluence. He should ever be gracious and speak with a smile. He should keep the company of the learned and the aged, conquer drowsiness, be uncovetous, fix up his mind on the behaviour of the honest, be easy to be pacified and put on beautiful dresses.

He should never exact money from the honest and should exact it from the wicked and offer it to the deserving good people.

His ministers and officers should be heroic, devoted, not amenable to estrangement, of high lineage, physically fit, cultured and having relation with the cultured, respectable and showing no disrespect to others, knowers of the śāstras and usages of the people, having keen eyes towards the inimical people, devoted to virtues, temperamentally honest and steady like the mountain. They should be heavily rewarded and the king should share equal amenities of life with them differing only in holding the royal umbrella. The direct and indirect perquisites of the ministers and officers should be equal with the king. By such an arrangement the king does not suffer in this world.

A pious king who is engaged in capturing the mind of the people does not go down to the enemies

and even if once defeated, rises again in no time. The king who is devoid of anger and addictions, soft in administering punishment and self-possessed becomes trustworthy to the people. The king who is wise, benevolent, inquisitive of the enemy's shortcomings, easily approachable to all the sections of the people, conversant in the good and bad ways, rapid in action, bereft of anger, easy to pacify, high souled, of faultless behaviour, active and boastless and fully successful in all the undertakings is the best among the kings. The king whose subjects move in the palace as freely as in the house of the father is the best of kings. The king whose subjects are free from quarrels, devoted to their own business, self-possessed and protected according to laws, submissive, controllable, fit to be governed and not quarrelsome and prone to benevolence is the best among kings. The king whose subjects need not hide their riches and know the good laws and their deviations is the best one. The king whose territories are free from deceit, trick, illusion and jealousy acquires never-ending merits. The king who rewards the learned, is devoted to the objects of knowledge and the welfare of others, follows the honest way in life and is munificent, deserves a kingdom. The king whose espionage, counsel and undertakings, complete or not, cannot be known to the enemy, alone, deserves a kingdom. Bhārgava (probably Vālmīki) has sung a verse about the king in the Rama story, - Get a king first of all as your protector, then have a wife and thereafter earn money. If there is no king where is the safety of the wife or the riches ? Therefore in the territory of the Kṣatriyas desiring a kingdom there is no other enduring dharma over and above protection. Protection

sustains the animals. Manu, son of Pracetas has added two verses to the effect.

A man should shun the company of the following six persons like the broken boat in the ocean, (1) the teacher who does not explain the śāstric texts, (2) the sacrificer who does not study the Vedas, (3) the king who does not protect, (4) the wife with a sharp tongue, (5) the cowherd desiring to live in the village and (6) the barber inclined to the forest-life.

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5. Supremacy of the Rājadharma

Bhīṣma has so far given the essence of the Rājadharma approved by Bṛhaspati and we have seen his discourse punctuated by references to and quotations from celebrated kings and ṛṣis. Now he proposes to give in a nutshell the history of the śāstra along with the contents of the very first detailed work attributed to Brahman, the self-born. Rājadharma, it should be noted, forms one of the most important items of the Indian Dharmaśāstra literature. It has its history from the hoary antiquity down to the present age. Most of the authors and works on dharma touched in the Epic are lost. Still the available literature is considerable in volume and importance. The materials available in the epic are corroborated by other sources and a unity and uniformity is visible among the various authorities traced. The Mahābhārata provides the most important document on the subject and its views have generally been supported by the available later literature.

Besides the original Daṇḍanītiśāstra of Brahman, the self-born, Bhīṣma refers to the most important subsequent authors - Viśālākṣa, Uśanas, Indra, Manu, the son of Pracetas, Bharadvāja and the sage Gauraśiras. All of them, says Bhīṣma, accept the protection of the people as the foremost duty of the kings. In connection with this protection the main topics of the śāstra have been enumerated. They are espionage, gifts in proper time and without envy, raising funds judiciously, attracting the honest and efficient people, prowess, skill and truthfulness

doing good to the citizens, creating split in the enemy's rank by plain and crooked methods, supervision and upkeep of old and dilapidated houses and temples, administration of monetary and physical punishment, as and when demanded, attachment to the honest, support to the people of high descent, collection of useful articles, devotion to the wise, constantly delighting the army, looking after the citizens, non-depression in the performance of duties, enhancement of the treasury, arrangement for the safety of the towns and forts, not trusting the people and trusting them after proper examination, breaking the revolt among the citizens, proper attention towards the enemy, neutral and friendly powers, resisting the breaking away of one's own officers by the enemy, regular visits to the cities and forts, generating trust among the enemies and not trusting them, close adherence to the science of polity and constant endeavour for the rise of the kingdom and its constituents, never neglecting the enemy and forsaking the heinous people. All these contribute to the progress of the king and his kingdom.

Bṛhaspati accepts exertion (Utthāna), as the root of the Rājadharma. He says, nectar could be obtained through exertion. The Asuras were killed through it. Indra got supremacy over gods and men on its strength. Expeditious heroes always rule over those adept in speech. The latter try to please and serve the former. A king devoid of perseverance is ever susceptible to enemy attack even if intelligent.

An enemy, though weak, should not be neglected by the strong vijigīṣu (aspirant for overlordship). A small burning stick or an iota of poison may cause huge conflagration and loss of

precious life. The enemy sheltered in the fort having anyone of the four constituents of the army can cause concern to even the prosperous rival.

The personal secrets of the king, replenishing the army with a view to victory over the enemies, the crooked designs in his mind which arise due to enemy provocation - all these should simply be kept covered and meritorious deeds should be undertaken for popular support. Kingship is a great undertaking. It cannot be borne by one bereft of self-control. This is a very taxing affair, impossible to be accomplished by a soft-hearted person. The kingdom is alluring to all and it cannot be sustained through simple behaviour. As such, a mixture of harshness with amiability has been recommended for its administration. Grave consequences may fall upon the king in course of his administering the kingdom. But even to die for the good of the people entails enormous merit for the king.

Yudhiṣṭhira now enquires about the duties of the varṇas and āśramas and their relation with the Rājadharma. The means of progress of the king and the kingdom and those of the royal officers and the citizens form the next items of his enquiry. Then come wealth, punishment, fort, ministers and officers, priests and teachers who should be avoided in the interest of the king and the kingdom. Then trustworthiness of the royal employees, citizens and the enemies.

Bhīṣma recounts the common virtues of all the four Varṇas, avoidance of anger, truthfulness, enjoyment of the wealth through proper distribution, forgiveness, faithfulness to the consort, purity of conduct, non-injury to life, simple behaviour, supporting the officers and servants.

The special virtues of the Varṇas and Āśramas come next. Self-control and study of the śāstras form the main virtues of the Brāhmaṇa. The primary duty of the Brāhmaṇa is his svādhyāya - preservation and propagation of the traditional Vedic lore. He may or may not do anything else. But svādhyāya makes him a friend to humanity. Over and above, teaching the Vedas and Vedāṅgas, sacrifices for one's benefit and for that of others, making gifts and receipt thereof from others are also enjoined as the duty of a Brāhmaṇa.

The Ksatriya has for his duty the Vedic studies, offering sacrifices and making gifts. But the teaching of the Vedas, officiating as a priest in a sacrifice and receiving gifts are forbidden in his case. Offering protection to the people is his main duty and he is successful by its due performance. He may do or not do anything else. But by offering protection alone he attains the position of Indra. The Kṣatriya should be ever active in eradicating the dacoits. A king learned in the Vedas, devoted to the sacrifices and conquering the enemies in battles attains the highest merit. To return from the battlefield with an unhurt body is not praised. The king should see that the different sections of the people observe their normal duties and all the peace-time avocation is carried strictly according to the principles laid down in the sacred texts.

The Vaiśya's duty consists of making gifts, study of the Vedas, sacrifice and earning money through fair means. A Vaiśya should protect the domestic animals which are a gift to him by the creator. The charge of others was given to the Brāhmaṇa and the Kṣatriya. The Vaiśya is entitled to get the milk of one cow when he tends six on

behalf of others. Out of one hundred cows reared up for others, he can claim a pair. Out of the price of the horns and milk his share is one-seventh. In the case of hoofs it is one sixteenth. Of the agricultural product for rearing it up and protection of the seed, the annual share of the Vaiśya is one–seventh. Primarily tending the domestic animals is the job of the Vaiśya and this cannot go to others, when a Vaiśya is available.

The creator has given the Śūdra the duty of serving the other Varṇas. And the welfare of the Śūdra is the charge of the other three Varṇas. The Śūdra's duty is to offer pākayajñas and the sacrificial fee in the form of pūrṇapātras. The Śūdras can claim the fruit of the other sacrifices served by them.

The concluding two verses on this topic regarding the performance of sacrifices by the Varṇas should be duly considered. They mean to say that a thief or a sinner or the worst among the sinners desiring to offer a sacrifice is to be regarded as a pious man. Ṛṣis praise this. No doubt sacrifice is the best of all the religious duties.

As regards the eligibility of a Śūdra to offer sacrifices the case of Paijāvana has been cited. According to the tradition, he offered Aindrāgni-sacrifice and offered as dakṣinā, one lakh pūrṇapātras.

Brahmacārya, the period for Vedic studies, gārhasthya, that of the house–holder, vānaprastha, the forest life and saṃnyāsa, the life of a bhikṣu - a mendicant constitute the life of a Brāhmaṇa. Among these the last one has been accepted by the Brāhmaṇa alone. During the brahmacarya stage one should undergo the cūḍākaraṇa and upanayana ceremonies and should complete the study of the

Veda. During the gārhasthya stage, he is to marry, rear children, offer the appropriate yajñas and perform all the six duties prescribed for a house-holder and pay off the debts to the gods, ṛṣis, pitṛs and the bhūtas. During the third stage he should leave the village and town life, repair to the forest with or without his wife, study the Āraṇyakaśāstra, live upon roots and fruits, and offer small sacrifices suitable to this āśrama. During the fourth Āśrama the Brahmaṇa leaves all his belongings and the fixed abode, wanders from place to place, eats whatever is offered and lies down wherever the night befalls, gives up all hopes and worldly inclinations and contemplates upon the supreme being.

The four Āśramas have been ordained for the Brāhmaṇas. There are some jobs particularly meant for the Kṣatriyas but they are not ideal for the Brāhmaṇas. A Brahmaṇa therefore cannot take up the Kṣatriya or Vaiśya way of life. Adherence to the six prescribed means of livelihood, and all the duties of the āśramas, keeping oneself armoured with dharma and the mind totally under control, outward and inward cleaniness, philanthrophy, penance and freedom from hankering, offer the Brāhmaṇa the highest place. Similarly the specific dharma of a Kṣatriya consists in the protection of the people and that of a Vaiśya consists in earning interest, agriculture, and cattle rearing.

The Śūdra after completing his caste duties, can with the permission of the king take up the life of a forest recluse. The Vaiśya also may, with similar royal permission accept the forest life. Similarly, the Kṣatriya also may go to the forest at the end of his life. But this change of āśramas for the Kṣatriya,

Vaiśya and Śūdra is not compulsory. On the other hand, all the duties of the forest life are voluntary for them.

Rājadharma depends upon physical force. It is prescribed for the Kṣatriya. And the Kṣatriya by dint of his own natural dharma, helps others to pursue their specific dharmas. This is the view of the Vedas. The footprints of all the animals lose their identity inside the footprint of the elephant. Similarly all the duties of all the Varṇas and āśramas are contained in the Rājadharma. The learned say that the scope of the dharmas of all other Varṇas is small and they produce little results. But the scope of the Rājadharma is the widest and it produces all-embracing results. The Rājadharma protects all the Varṇas and as such it is the best of all the varṇadharmas. When daṇḍanīti is affected even the Vedic dharma goes down and consequently other varṇadharmas are also lost. The āśramadharmas also perish along with them. All the gifts, all the teachings, all the knowledge and all the people depend on the Rājadharma for their existence. Māndhātā also declares that all the dharmas enter the Rājadharma and as such the Rājadharma is the greatest of all. He further adds that the eternal dharma was vitiated several times and was rehabilitated by the Rājadharma. It is therefore the supreme among the dharmas.

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6. The King and His Choice

The most important duty of the people of a State is the selection of a king. A State without a sovereign ruler becomes devastated by the robbers. Nobody can pursue his own duty and prosper if the king is not there to administer the law. There arises mutual strife and ultimately anarchy prevails. The Vedas declare that to choose a king is to honour Indra. And the king should be worshipped just like Indra, the ruler of the three worlds. None should live in a land bereft of the king. When the kingdom has no king or has a weakling for a king, a strong, efficient and just person if available, should be installed as king. There is no danger worse than living under anarchy. The new incumbent, if displeased, may destroy the kingdom. If pleased he may do immense good to it. The cow difficult to milk suffers a lot. And a timid one receives no injury. Those who bend without heating are not heated. And the duly submissive subjects receive judicious treatment from the ruler. Submission to the duly installed ruler is therefore a duty on the part of the subjects. To submit before the strong means submission to Indra himself. Public good hinges upon the ruler and no family nor riches are safe in an anarchy. The robbers rob the people of their belongings as the big fish devour the smaller ones in waters. This is technically called mātsyanyāya.

As the Itihāsa goes, the people devastated by anarchy assembled in a convention and decided eradication of those guilty of excesses in the use of

language and punishment, torture on women and misappropriation of property. They established rules governing such and similar cases of unsocial behaviour in the society. In course of time, the agreement began to be violated and the people had to approach the creator for redress. The creator selected Manu svāyambhū for their king. But Manu hesitated to accept the assignment considering the huge task involved and the weaknesses of the people. The people then assured him that the sin incurred would go to the sinner, the king will get one out of every fifty domestic animals, one fiftieth of gold and one-tenth of the unhusked grains for the royal treasury as taxes, and a beautiful girl of the marriageable age for his bride. The people with weapons and vehicles would follow him as the gods do in the case of Indra. He would attain majesty through active public support. And protection of the people on his part would be as easy as that of Kubera in the case of the Rākṣasas. They further assured Manu a quarter of their spiritual merit acquired under his protection. Manu accepted the assignment and offered all-round protection to the people. Bhīṣma concludes the topic with the remark that the selection of a king is the first requisite for the proper protection of the people. And the king on his part should be unassailable through public support and amiable in public conduct.

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7. Āpaddharma

Āpaddharma means the duty at the time of adversity due to natural or artificial reasons. As the Āpaddharma-parvan forms an appendix to the Rājadharma, it is but natural that the problems of the Kṣatriya should receive priority here. Yudhiṣṭhira pointed out some specific difficulties which the king has to face, the allied powers may refuse the usual help, the enemies may be numerous in number and stronger in equipment, the treasury may be exhausted, the army may become weak, the ministers may revolt, the secret counsel may become public, the foundations of the kingdom may be weak and no internal and external help may be forthcoming. Stronger enemies may attack the king when he is in action against someone else. His own territory may be unsafe due to the ignorance of time and place. Peace with the enemy may be difficult or splits amongst the enemy's rank may be impossible due to excessive measures already taken by the king concerned. These and such other calamities may shake his very existence. Yudhiṣṭhira wants to know the measure to be taken for self-preservation of the king in distress and the preservation of his subjects.

Bhīṣma answered – The problems are grave. The śāstras are there. They should be heard and honestly followed. One has to utilize his personal intellect also. Success, however, is attained in rare cases. The rules of Rājadharma cannot be followed during the calamities in toto. But the spirit of dharma should not be lost sight of even if infringement thereof may be unavoidable. For example, the king's primary

duty is to preserve the interests of the subjects. But in times of distress he has no other way out except extortion of their riches. When the treasury is empty, all the difficulties crop up. As such, to replenish the treasury is the first and foremost duty of the king. This should be done tactfully and with caution so that an internal revolt does not arise. The money extracted beyond the usual rule should be regarded as debts and be paid back when better days come. This is supported by the ancient practice. The rules during adversity may be different from those during the normal days. Coercion is permissible if it helps the king and the people to survive. The weak even if virtuous, cannot be sure of livelihood. During emergencies infringement upon the dhārmika rubs also is regarded as dharma though the learned people may differ here.

When the evil days are gone the king should take such a course that the rules of dharma are preserved and the integrity of the state remains intact.

But there should be rules with regard to exacting money during emergency also. The wealth of the mendicants and the Brāhmaṇas should not be touched. To do so may cause confusion and revolt.

The Brāhmaṇas also officiate as priests of the low people and take food from them in times of adversity. The case of the Kṣatriya is not different. One in distress or in captivity has to come out even through unfair means. The king cannot take the life of a begger, a Vaiśya or a Śūdra as the welfare of the entire population is his responsibility. In ordinary cases, taking up the means of livelihood of the immediate lower varṇa is admissible during calamity. The Kṣatriya, however as the

representative of the whole people cannot follow it. A Kṣatriya has to punish the wicked and protect the honest. He has therefore to take money from the affluent citizens. It should not be called hiṃsā, for life without it is impossible and a mendicant also is not quite free from it.

No doubt, the life prescribed by Śaṅkha and Likhita is highly respected. The story goes that the sage Likhita had to undergo severe punishment for taking a fruit from his brother's hermitage without permission. This may be true in case of private individuals, but never for a king who has to protect a state.

The king and the kingdom are mutually dependant. The king has to protect the kingdom and in times of distress the people also have to protect the king. The king cannot allow the treasury, army, friends and other possessions of the state to dwindle when he is not affluent. The seed should be preserved for future even at the cost of one's own food. Śambara, the Asura king says that a king is to be despised when his kingdom suffers for want of food and protection. The riches of a king are his wealth and army. The army, again, is dependant upon wealth. The army representing royal power is at the root of the dharmas. The welfare of the people depends upon these dharmas. And money cannot be available in distress without causing pain to the people. This unavoidable pain is to be endured in view of the larger national interest. To exact money from the people is beneficial and not to do so is detrimental. This is true in other similar emergency measures. Here a parallel may be cited. A sacrificial post (yūpa) has to be brought from the jungle involving the loss of plant-life on the way and

several trees and creepers are killed in felling the tree. Thus those who stand against the necessary but painful political measures are to be removed.

Wealth is the instrument for well-being here and hereafter. It helps the fostering of truth and piety. None of these is attainable to the poor. The protection of the people is the supreme duty of a Kṣatriya. Āpaddharma does not mean want of dharma but temporary suspension or twisting of the usual dharma to avoid total extinction.

Wealth usually is earned through gifts, penance, exertion, intelligence and skill. A poor man or a poor state is really weak. One with a rich treasury overcomes every difficulty. Wealth is the instrument for dharma and enjoyment here and hereafter. One should therefore strive to earn wealth honestly with a view to the good of the self and others.

Now, a danger may come from within the state or from outside. The enemy from outside may be honest and pure from the point of view of dharma and artha. In such a case the weak king should make peace with him through concessions. In case the enemy is dishonest, and wants to overcome through sheer force, peace should be sought even through offer of the capital or other riches and preserve the self and the maximum property and territory in the hope of making good the loss under favourable conditions. Even in the extreme cases, the safety of the harems should also be assured and the rest may be sacrificed.

When dangers come both from inside and from outside, the endangered king should either seek peace or courageously face war without loss of time. Chances of victory are there when the army is devoted, well-nourished, trained and

self-sacrificing. In case of the reverses and even death, honour is preserved and heavenly reward is assured. Or, attempts should be made to make the enemy favourable and accept his supremacy, at least for the time being or the king may escape with as many men and as much material through a show of submission.

Wealth is to be drawn from one's own territory and from outside as it produces dharma and strengthens the kingdom. The acquired wealth is to be preserved and increased. Wealth cannot be raised through simple behaviour. As such, one should be harsh and amicable according to the demand of the situation. A weak person cannot expect huge wealth and without it an army cannot be raised and maintained. And a king without a strong army cannot expect a kingdom and preserve it. Loss of affluence is like death to a person like the king. As such, the king should try to enhance the treasury, army and friendship with other kings. A king with slender wealth is despised, the subordinates remain dissatisfied and inattentive to duty when their remuneration is meagre and inconstant. Wealth offers respect and covers the misdeeds, if any.

People aggrieved for former misbehaviour of the king remain inimical and create serious difficulties for him. They should be suppressed and no consideration towards them should be shown. One should rather die than submit to the internal enemies. It is better to go to forest than to submit to the outlaws. It is easy to get accomplices for the outlaws and to create disturbances. The king should therefore establish good conventions, pleasing to the public to counteract their menace.

There are again people who do not accept the

good values of this life and the life here-after. And they must not be trusted. Some outlaws respect good conventions in restricted fields and receive some consideration from the people. But the killing of the innocent and unequipped people, crime against women, ingratitude, forcible occupation of the property of the elite, turning people pauper, abduction of girls and forcible encroachment on other's land are heinous crimes. There are people who come in contact with these outlaws after being robbed and disclose their misdeeds when intimacy grows. The outlaws also should not rob the whole property of the victim allowing him to live. Those that rob the whole have chances to be wholly eradicated.

To the enlightened kṣatriya dharma and artha are directly perceived. But the question of dharma and adharma should not be raised about the means of their acquisition. The king should try to attain physical and material strength to which everybody bows down. A strong king acquires fortune, military and friendly strength and a poor king suffers for the little left with him is considered impure. A strong king even with a few vices cannot be disregarded. But those faithful to truth and authority save the people from great dangers.

Strength is mightier than piety. Piety proceeds from strength. Dharma has strength for its substratum as the earth holds the moving creatures. Smoke moves through the force of the air. Similarly, strength directs the course of dharma. Just as a creeper hangs upon a tree, dharma depends upon strong kings. Enjoyment of pleasure depends upon affluence. There is nothing unattainable to the strong. And everything about the strong is pure.

The weak and misguided king finds no saviour and the people are afraid of him as of the leopard. One divested and insulted passes a miserable life. And a despised life is comparable to death. To be despised for one's own lapses is an additional punishment.

Now, the authorities would prescribe the following as expiatory rights to be observed by the king in fault –

(1) study of the Vedas; (2) disciplehood under the twice-born; (3) use of sweet speech and blameless undertakings; (4) the liberality of mind; (5) marriage in a noble family; (6) acceptance of personal misdeeds; (7) praise for others' virtues; (8) ablutions and prayers; (9) charming behaviour; (10) taciturnity and; (11) association with Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas even after undergoing censures for the mischief done.

The sins being thus washed away, the person concerned very soon receives approbation, enjoys happiness, saves himself by pious actions and attains great results.

The traditional view attributed to Brāhman, the creator, as handed down through generations of scholars about the enhancement of the royal treasury runs as follows – The king should not lay his hand on the belongings of the sacrificers, nor on the divine trusts. He may take the property of the outlaws and of those fallen from the social and religious norms. All the people, the entire territory and the riches belong to the Kṣatriya and to none else. But he can utilise them only for enhancing the army and for sacrificial purposes. Men use the unwholesome trees and plants to cook the wholesome ones. Those who do not sacrifice to the

gods, manes and men with oblation or food accumulate money in vain. The pious king may confiscate their property for the protection of the people. It entails no sin on his part. The king who takes away money from the sinners and offers the same to the good people actually serves the sinners themselves to cross the sinful river of saṃsāra, chain of births and deaths, making himself the bridge over it. The king should conquer the worlds slowly according to his capacity just like the creepers and ants. People without sacrificial undertakings are born without any purpose just like the flies and mosquitoes. They should be driven away like them. And thus dharma will flourish. Dust from the earth if further powdered between two stones becomes smaller and smaller in size. Likewise deliberations make the Rājadharma very subtle to comprehension.

The story of the three fish, the terrified, the instant-intellect and the fatalist has been introduced to show that the king apprehending danger should arrange for safety earlier than its actual appearance, or on its arrival. But to lay inactive for long is dangerous.

The next story of the rat, mongoose, owl, cat and the hunter illustrates how the weakest king surrounded by several enemies can save himself through his keen intellect and knowledge of the science of politics. The introductory remarks of Bhīṣma deserve quotation. An enemy becomes a friend and a friend also turns away due to the force of the situation and the relations always change due to situations. Hence he should first consider the place and time, ascertain one's duty and make friends or fight accordingly. Desirous of his own welfare, an intelligent king should make peace even

with the enemy and protect his own life. One who does not make peace with the enemy, does not prosper and reaps no good result. One befriending an enemy and fighting a friend on consideration of the gain and loss reaps important results.

Two gāthās sung by Uśanas are quoted at the conclusion of the story. When there are two enemies, the king should make peace with the stronger and move on with care, but when successful, he should no more trust this newfangled friend. One should not trust an unworthy person nor should one put too much confidence even in a trusted person. In the story of Brahmadatta and Pūjanī repeated again in the Harivaṃśapurāṇa, Pūjanī retaliated the killing of her son by uprooting the eyes of the son of Brahmadatta who still requested her to live in his palace.

Pūjanī, in course of the story mentions the sources of enmity – The learned people know very well the fact that enmity springs from five sources, i.e., for women (as between Kṛṣṇa and Śiśupāla), for land (as between the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas), for unhonoured verbal assurance (as between Drupada and Droṇa), from heredity (as between the rat and the cat), and due to offence (as between Brahmadatta and Pūjanī).

One's knowledge, prowess, skill, strength and steadiness are the five natural friends and the wise live with their help.

Uśanas recited two gāthās to Prahlāda in this connection. A man who trusts a false friend, is destroyed like one who wants to catch hold of a quantity of honey placed on the dry grass covering a well.

When painful enmity crops up between two families, there will be no dearth of people to fan it up, and it will last as long as the families are not uprooted.

In the dialogue between the sage Bharadvāja Kaṇika and king Śatruñjaya of the Sauvīras, the king approached Kaṇika with the questions - (1) How can the unattained riches be attained (2) how can it be enhanced (3) how can the enhanced wealth be saved and (4) how can the saved money be utilised ?

Kaṇika replied : The king should always be ready with his arms and expose hismanliness. He should seek the weaknesses of the opponent and strike at the right time. A king ready to use arms causes severe concern in the opponents. As such arms should be used to subdue all the creatures. The learned praise punishment and it is the best among the group of four means of flourishing, viz, pacification, gift, causing split and punishment. When the chief is done away with, all the followers succumb. How can the branch live when the root of the tree is taken out ? As such the main person among the enemies should be killed. Then his supporters and friends also should be removed. One should at the time of calamity cautiously make the plan, show his prowess cautiously, fight the enemy with caution and, cautiously escape, when necessary. No other consideration should deter him. The king should be amiable only in speech, but his heart should be as harsh as a razor. He should initiate the talk with polished language and control lust and anger. An enemy is not to be trusted even after a treaty with him. And the prudent king should transgress the limits as soon as his own purpose is served. An enemy should be pacified just like a

friend but one should always remain afraid of him as from a snake in one's own house. One who can be overcome intellectually should be pacified with the narration of the past events. The fool is to be overcome with future hopes. And to the learned the gravity of the present situation should be explained. One should fold his hands, swear, pacify, speak with bent head and shed tears before the enemy with a view to personal prosperity. Carry the enemy on your own shoulders till better time comes and on its arrival break him like an earthen jar striking it on the stone. Burn for a while like the fire from a tinduka tree (diospiros embriopteris). But do not emit smoke without flame like the husk for a long while. Do not have any monetary relation with the ungrateful when you are interested in fulfilling your diverse personal ends. You may use the supplicant to your advantage. But he will insult you when his purpose is served. As such, you should never complete his job. The best virtues in the cuckoo, boar, Meru, vacant house, and the devoted friend should be imitated.

The cuckoo has the sweetest voice, the bear has irresistibility in attack, the Meru is the highest among mountains, the vacant house can accommodate several individuals, the actor pleases others through his fits, the friend serves his counterpart devotedly. One should regularly and cautiously visit the enemy's house and enquire about his welfare even if he is unwell. A lazy person, a weakling, a self-conceited person, one afraid of public censure or one ever waiting for the opportunity, does never attain a fortune. The king should hide his personal weaknesses and know

them in others. He should save his limbs like the tortoise and cover his own faults.

Be attentive like a crane, show prowess like a lion and snatch the belongings of the enemy and move to the target like an arrow. Enjoy drinks, dice, women, hunting and music with temperance. Addiction to them is harmful. A king should prepare bamboo-bows, lay in wait like a beast of prey, behave like the blind and the deaf. The prudent king should show his prowess when the proper place and time arrive. Any attempt is bound to fail when time and place are not favourable. He should consider the appropriate time and his own strength as well as the strength of the enemy and apply himself to action if everything is favourable. The king who sets free an enemy who has been subdued through daṇḍa (punishment) meets his death like the she-mule who conceives to die. Be covered with flowers, but bear no fruit. Even if you bear fruits, do not be easy of access. Behave like a ripe fruit even if you are really green. But do not expose your weakness.

Provide hopes with a time-limit. And raise some impediment when the time comes. The impediment removed, show some excuse, and the excuse, if removed, adduce some cause. Treat as afraid so long as the danger is afar. When it arrives, strike like a brave man. The good cannot be achieved without entering doubts. One who lives after overcoming doubts attains prosperity. Try to know the imminent danger. Suppress it when it arrives. Treat it as unquenched, lest it revives again. To shirk the present enjoyment and to hope for the future one is no policy of an intelligent king. The group of three, dharma (piety), artha (means of enjoyment)

and kāma (enjoyment) bring three kinds of pain in their train, - covetousness, foolishness and weakness; there are three benefits also - peace of mind, good to all and enjoyment out of them. The former group should be avoided and the latter one should be accepted. The remnants of debt, of fire and of the enemy should not be allowed to last. They repeatedly assume magnitude if ignored. Debt, defeated enemies and disease when ignored become furious. No undertaking should be left unfinished. One should not swerve from his duties. A small thorn inside the body creates pus. The kingdom of the rival king should be destroyed through secret killing of citizens, destroying the roads and houses. Have a penetrating sight like a vulture, patience like a crane, the alertness like a dog, prowess like a lion and one should remain steady, apprehensive like a crow and ready to enter other men's abodes just like a snake. Conquer the strong enemy through submission, the timid through split, the greedy through bribes and the equal through fight. Save the ministers from the secret overtures of the leaders of factions, propitiation of the friends, attempts to create splits and actual fightings. The enemy neglects the opponent when he is timid, becomes anxious when he is harsh in behaviour. But one should be timid and harsh as and when circumstances demand. An intelligent king should kill the weak with the help of the weak and the strong also with the help of the weak. There is nothing stronger than the weak. As such the weak is the strongest. One who becomes timid and harsh according to the demand of the time carries out his own duty and defeats the enemies. When in enmity with a sound man, one should not feel safe even if

he is far away. The hands of the intelligent are long enough through which he strikes when harmed. Do not swim in a river the other shore of which you cannot reach. Do not snatch anything which the enemy will recover from you. Do not dig anything if you cannot remove the root thereof. Do not strike anybody when you cannot kill him.

Kaṇika concludes his talk with a warning. The whole discourse is mixed with improper dealings. It should not be taken recourse to in normal conditions. But it will serve the interest of the honest also, when the opponent uses these precepts against the former. In times of distress they may be used on extreme occasions.

It should be noted here that another Kaṇika, a minister of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, taught these to the king but did not warn him of their evil consequences, particularly when the Pāṇḍavas were never inimical to him and Dhṛtarāṣṭra was in no difficulty that may warrant the application of āpaddharma. That Bhīṣma includes this discourse in the Āpaddharma section shows that it is meant for the king in distress.

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8. The Rājadharma Literature - Early Phase

The Mahābhārata gives the account of the earliest work of Indian political science, composed by Brahman in one lak chapters wherein every conceivable topic directly or indirectly connected with kingship received treatment.

The topics dealt with consist of the following among others:

(1) The trivarga - Dharma, artha and kāma

(2) The trivarga relating to mokṣa - Sattva, rajas and tamas.

(3) The trivarga relating to daṇḍanīti - Sthāna (equilibrium), vṛddhi (gain) and kṣaya (loss).

(4) The six vargas of the daṇḍanīti - Ātmā (self), deśa (place), kāla (time), upāya (accessories), kṛtya (aim) and sahāyas (friends) together constituting the cause of any political issue.

(5) The four vidyās – Trayī (the threefold Veda), ānvīkṣikī (the science of logic), vārtā (economics), and daṇḍanīti (the science of polity).

(6) The safety of and from the ministers and the officers.

(7) Pratinidhi (ambassadors)

(8) Rājaputrarakṣaṇa (safety of the king from his sons).

(9) Cāras (spies) of different categories with different expedients.

(10) The different categories of royal substitutes (Pratinidheyas).

(11) Sāma (pacification)

(12) Bheda (effecting split in the enemy ranks)

(13) Pradāna (political concession)

(14) Daṇḍa (administration of punishment)

(15) Upekṣā (indifference)

(16) Mantra (counsel)

(17) Mantrabheda (disclosure of the counsel)

(18) Mantra-vibhrama (confusion about the counsel)

(19) Mantrasiddhi (success in counsel)

(20) Mantrāsiddhi (failure of counsel)

(21) The three kinds of Sandhi - Hīnasandhi (treaty at a loss), Madhyamasandhi (treaty with no loss and no gain) Uttamasandhi (treaty with gain) respectively, called bhaya, satkāra, and vitta sandhis.

(22) Four yātrākālas (opportunities for march against the enemy).

(23) Trivarga's delineation

(24) Dharma-vijaya (judicious victory).

(25) Artha-vijaya (victory for gain).

(26) Asura-vijaya (forcible victory with no consideraiton for the victims).

(27) The definition of the five vargas with the three variations each. The vargas are minister, territory, fort, army and treasury. Each of these are good, bad and indifferent.

(28) Daṇḍa - punishment of two kinds, manifest and secret. The manifest ones are of eight

varieties and the secret one is of numerous types.

(29) The eight varieties of manifest daṇḍa are from chariot, elephant, horse, foot soldiers, soldiers rendering free service, the marine soldiers, spies and the preceptor.

(30) Those of the secret variety–poison may be had from movable creatures like snakes and immovable objects like trees or plants.

(31) Upāmśu-vadha is of several varieties – poison may be administered through the garments or through the food and drink of the victim.

(32) The virtues of the roads as well as of the ground, self-preservation, creating faith and supervising the construction of the necessary articles.

(33) The positions of the ari (enemy), mitra (friend) and udāsīna (neutral) kings – explained.

(34) Devices regarding the four limbs of the army, the different formations with their nomenclature, rising upwards, going downwards, skilful fighting and escaping when required with men and materials with no loss, nursing the armoury and knowledge thereof.

(35) Defection in the army and delighting soldiers.

(36) Damage to the army and its occasions of calamity.

(37) Problems of the foot-soldiers

(38) Excavation of the ditches

(39) Constitution of the army and its movement.

(40) Afflicting the enemy territory through thieves, foresters, outlaws, etc., use of fire, poison and impersonation for the same purpose.

(41) Creating splits among the generals of the enemy rank.

(42) Destroying the vegetation of the enemy territory.

(43) Afflicting the elephants

(44) Creating terror among the enemies

(45) Estranging the allies

(46) Creating faith by the enemy in its own favour.

(47) The loss, gain and equilibrium in respect of the seven - limbed state.

(48) Enhancing one's own state through espionage.

(49) The details about the enemy, neutral and friendly powers.

(50) Actual fighting and counter-attack against the strong enemy.

(51) Minute military dealings

(52) Removing the obstacles prior to making a march.

(53) Exertion and military exercise

(54) Feeding those having none to look after them.

(55) Protection to the affluent

(56) Payment of money in due time

(57) Avoidance of excessive addiction to enjoyments.

(58) The virtues of the king and his ministers

(59) Diverse military manoeuvres

(60) Consideration about the emoluments of the subordinates.

(61) Distrust in all

(62) Avoidance of carelessness

(63) Acquisition of wealth, enhancing the acquired wealth and due distribution of the enhanced wealth among the deserving candidates. Spending it for religious purposes, for personal enjoyment and for tiding over the difficulties.

(64) The Vyasanas arising from kāma (lust) and krodha (anger) - Hunting, playing at dice, addiction to drinking and sex, use of harsh language, ferociousness, excessive punishment, confinement, forsaking one for good and causing monetary loss.

(65) The machines and their use.

(66) Destroying the territory, charging against, and demolishing the houses.

(67) The destruction of the caitya trees, seizure of forts, etc.

(68) Teaching of technology and agriculture.

(69) Making and repairing the parts of the chariot.

(70) Civic rules and means of livelihood

(71) The procurement of instruments like wardrums, conch shells, kettle drum, games, beasts, territory, dress, servants, gold and destruction thereof.

(72) Establishing peace in the acquired territory,

honouring the good citizens and association with the learned.

(73) Touching the auspicious objects

(74) Nourishing the body

(75) Arrangements for foods and drinks

(76) Constant belief in God, Vedas, etc.

(77) The way to prosperity of the single individual

(78) Truthfulness and secret speech

(79) Arranging domestic festivals and assemblies.

(80) Direct and indirect supervision over the administration of impartial law in the law courts.

(81) Immunity of the Brāhmaṇas from punishment.

(82) The administration of judicious punishment.

(83) Prosperity of the loyal subjects, kinsmen and the qualified citizens.

(84) Safety of the citizens and the property of the state.

(85) Consideration about the circle of twelve kings.

(86) Seventy-two kinds of treatment of the body

(87) Dharma (duty), artha (economics, commerce etc.).

(88) Different ways of achieving success

(89) Greed for wealth

(90) Fundamental sources of wealth and

(91) The ways to keep the people on the right path.

After the preparation of this scientific treatise, the creator told the gods with Indra at their head, that the śāstra has been conceived for the benefit of the people and for the thorough operation of the three vargas in secular life. It is the essence of learning. It, assisted by the actual practice of daṇḍa, protects the people, can make or mar them and is expected to influence the successive generations. The śāstra through the help of actual use of will daṇḍa help the people to prosper. Again it regulates the daṇḍa also. As such it transcends all the three worlds in importance. It offers the best results available from the practice of the six expedients, viz, peace, warfare, marching towards the enemy etc. It will persist in influencing the great people as all the four human ends have thoroughly been dealt with here.

The list of topics given above and a few verses from it here and there in the Mahābhārata are only preserved for us. The terms however are sometimes ambiguous and most of them seem to have not acquired any definite connotation and denotation. A comparison with the extant literature, however, removes many of the difficulties of the students of Indian politics. The value of the Mahābhārata account of the Svāyambhuvanītiśāstra is that it presents the contents thereof showing its wide scope and considerable depth.

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9. The Subsequent Literature

The Nītiśāstra was first studied by Śaṃkara who is also called Śiva, Sthāṇu, Umāpati etc. He considered the unmanageable extent of the work during the short human life - span and prepared a shorter version of ten thousand chapters. This is known as the Vaiśālākṣatantra according to his name in vogue among the political authorities. It has been quoted or referred to by authorities like Viśvarūpācārya in his Bālakrīḍā on the Yājñavalkya Saṃhitā (I. 328) and Nīlakaṇṭha in his celebrated commentary on the Mahābhārata, The Bhāvadīpa (XII.134). But summaries of views of Viśālākṣa in the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya are most important. The Mahābhārata, as we have already noticed, also mentions other authors of the science of politics. Indra condensed it into five thousand chapters. And his version is called Bāhudantakaśāstra. Bṛhaspati prepared the next version consisting of three thousand chapters. It is known as Bārhaspatyaśāstra. The next version prepared by Uśanas in one thousand chapters is known as Auśanasatantra. The frequent quotations of the views from Bṛhaspati, Indra and Uśanas in the Mahabharata itself and elsewhere allow no doubt about the existence and currency of their works. The appearance of several schools of political thought is also suggested. Kauṭilya refers to the political views of Bhāradvāja (Droṇa), Vātavyādhi (Uddhava), Kauṇapadanta (Bhīṣma), Parāśara and Pārāśaras. These may be digests or independent treatises during the epic age itself.

The treatise of Kautilya in one hundred and fifty chapters seems to be the most precise and directly related to the Svāyambhuva tradition covering the same field and quoting and criticising the authorities known to the Mahābhārata.